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Victoria Press
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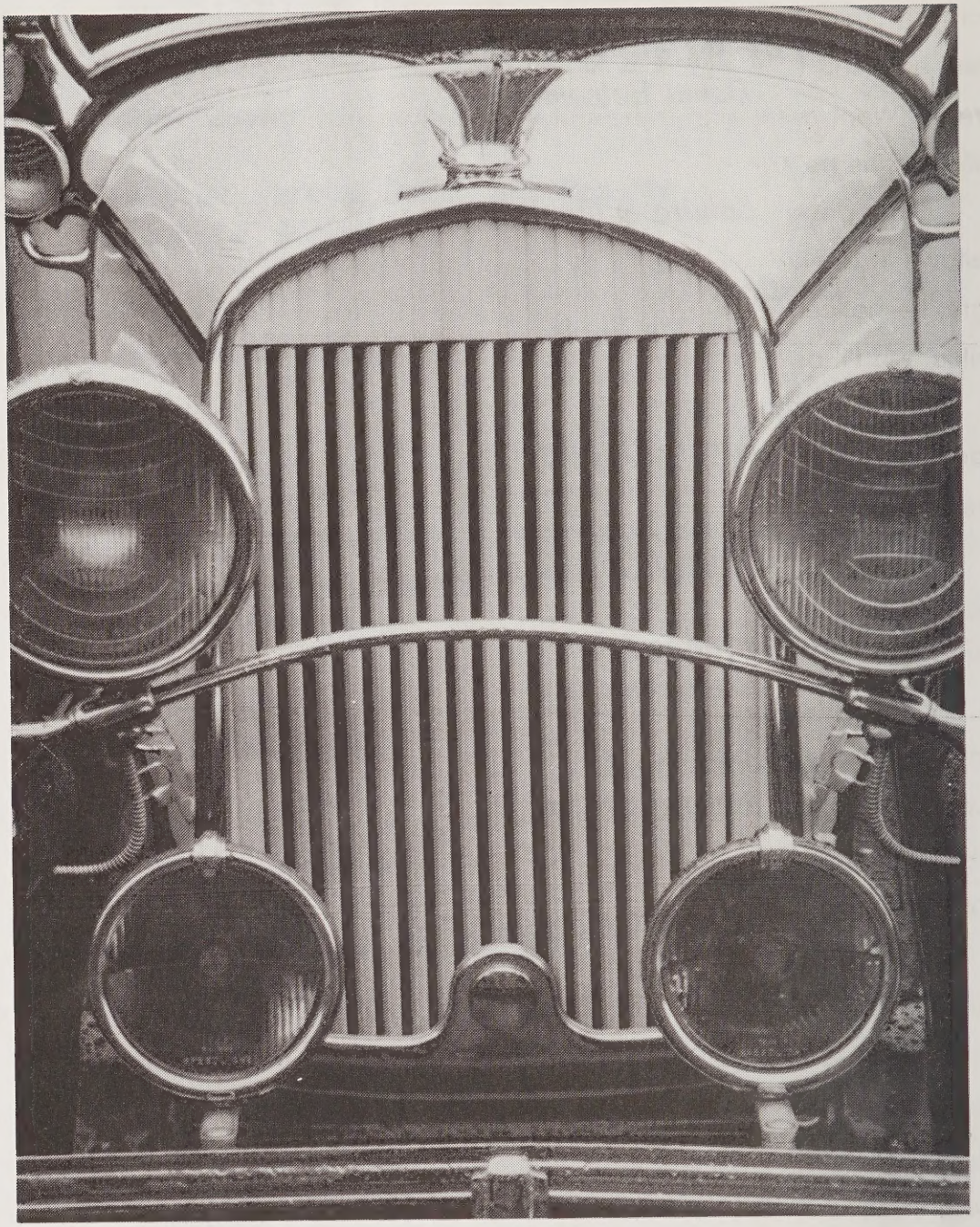


The Dream Journal

Jason Kennerly's red rusty Saab 900 coupe seemed to float down Highway 46 from Bloomington toward Nashville, Indiana. Better slow down, Jason thought, don't want anything to spoil this weekend. It was Friday, October 11, the beginning of fall break. Want everything to be just as I planned, just the way I looked forward to, he reflected as he deliberately slowed his speed on the hilly, curvy two-lane.

The passing trees of Brown County were bright fluttering reds, oranges and yellows in the fall afternoon sun. Everything seemed brighter and clearer in the fall light, he noticed as he turned onto Highway 135 toward Toby's cabin. Just two more miles and I'll be free.

The last few weeks he didn't think he'd make it. I can't do this anymore, he had thought repeatedly. He awakened one morning with his right hand shaking uncontrollably. Jesus, he had been close to losing it.

He glanced at himself in the rearview mirror. Black-brown curly hair and mustache, dark circled dead brown eyes behind the horn rims, and white pale skin with a tinge of green--definitely getting anemic.

Teaching freshman composition and working the rest of the time in the graduate library at Indiana University was taking its toll, but this week would put everything to rights. He'd gotten rid of that stack of midterm themes before leaving, and now, he had four days with nothing to do but work on his dissertation, a psycho-analytical approach to Old and Middle English dream poetry.

He glanced at the bags and boxes in the back seat. One box of books--purchased at bookstores, overdue from the library, or pinched and purloined from friends and faculty. Begged, borrowed, and stolen, he chuckled to himself. Jung, Freud, Maeder, Sperry, Curry, Greenfield, Laplanche, and collections by Stone, Alexander, and others of Old English verse, as well as Chaucer, Langland, and the Pearl poet. Beside it, another box of carefully documented notes--file folders full of possibilities. Maybe this weekend he could put it all together.

The tires seemed to crunch eagerly into the gravelly bottom of Toby's driveway. Jason jumped out and fumbled in his pocket for the key. Jeez, I hope I didn't forget the key, he worried as his fingers fished among the change and loose dollars in his pocket. The key presented itself to his anxious hand, and he walked quickly to unlock the chain, grasping the lock. Good old key #3902 slipping into the

bottom of lock #3902. A faint click and he was into a special place--alone and free, free of petulant, childlike, sulking freshman faces, free from the barbed wire of the graduate school, and maybe even free from Beth.

Beth. The best way to be free from Beth, he reminded himself, was not to think of her at all. He drove across the downed chain and then locked it behind him. Free from the world, locked away from everything--everything, including Beth.

Up the hill and around the curve brought the top of the cabin into view. Cabin, he smiled, it's more like a log manor house. Old Dr. Braun, Toby's father, had taken three two-story log homestead houses and connected them into one log house that could sleep twenty or thirty people. The first house, nearest the drive, was the kitchen, which had a loft. The second or middle house was the living room downstairs and the men's dorm upstairs. The third house was Dr. Braun's quarters downstairs and the ladies' dorm upstairs. All very proper.

Carefully preserved ancient sycamore trees with their peeling bark surrounded the house and covered the mossy lane. Across the drive stood the remains of a corn field, and beyond the house on the other side were the woods leading to the strip pits, small man-made lakes where limestone had been cut from the ground. The stagnant ponds had filled with water--cold, cold water--since some of the pits were more than a hundred feet deep. You really had to be careful swimming there because the transition from eighty to ninety degree air to the forty degree water could be dangerous, Jason considered, remembering that some of the most pleasant summer afternoons of his life had been spent at the pits with Toby and Peg, and dammit, there she was again--Beth.

Jason stood on the flagstone patio holding the plastic bags full of groceries from the Great Scot in Bloomington--looking into the radiant woods, and then he turned slowly 180 degrees, past the sycamores, around to the dead corn field behind the rusty Saab in the driveway. He could hear the rustling of the sycamore leaves and the scraping of the corn stalks as three cawing crows sailed up into the cloudless sky.

Perfect . . . perfect, he thought. This weekend is going to be everything I've hoped for.

His eye caught a flash of white at the base of the corn. Was it a rabbit?. . .no, a fox . . .a white fox. . .an albino. That's what had stirred the crows. The mean red eyes stared at Jason and then disappeared, leaving him unsure if he had really seen

the fox at all. . .or whether he had dreamt it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

About an hour after eating, Jason climbed the ladder to the loft, taking Chaucer's Love Visions with him. At the top, he paused and look down at the books and notes arranged across the marble slabbed soda fountain that Dr. Braun had rescued from some drug store or ice cream parlor. Jason had wanted to do some writing, but after an hour, he realized he was only stacking and restacking books and notes.

I'll reread Chaucer tonight, he thought while piling up the pillows. He had built a cozy fire in the Franklin stove downstairs, and as long as he stayed in the kitchen and left the rest of the house closed off, he would be plenty warm enough on an Indian summer's eve.

He opened his journal and reread his last dream:

Oct. 3. I dreamt that I was watching an elaborate parade while sitting on a pleasant park bench. The floats and bands were coming out of a tunnel and up the street.
More and more people stopped to watch.
My bench became uncomfortably filled.
Things began to go wrong--bands tripped and fell, floats broke in two, spilling their riders onto the street.
The chaos continued while the crowd grew larger and more hostile.
Suddenly there was a fire in the tunnel. People were screaming inside. I ran to the fire station, but they would not come and help.

There were no other entries since last Sunday's dream. Jason figured, I didn't really sleep much since then--the stress of midterm, and well, the moon was growing full. It was full tonight, wasn't it? What did they call this one; was it the harvest moon?

Jason put the journal down next to the bed, making sure the pencil was sticking out and marking the next available page--in case he needed to make an entry during the night. His thesis chairman had suggested that keeping a dream journal might make it easier for him to understand both the uses of dreams in early English literature as well as Freud and Jung's theories on the nature of dreams. Although he was very tired tonight, it was unlikely he would need it. He didn't sleep very well when the moon was full.

He opened the Chaucer to The Book of the Duchess, reading the poet's complaint of sleeplessness, the tale of Alcyone and Ceyx from Ovid, and then into the poet's dream. Here I am, he smiled, reading an ancient poem--like Chaucer's poet. Wouldn't it be nice if this would bring me sleep. . .

Sleep, like the poet in his nest
fell into sleep and made his quest.

Jason's eyes closed . . .

I dreamt a dream, a dreamer's right!
That swept me up and out of night,
And made me see the month of May,
A reverie in warmth of day.
In dream I woke in tower tall
From where I spied the woods and all
In which the hunting of the hart
Did not for me delay its start.
So, fast I ran from bed and tower
To chase the hart 'neath tree and bower.

It's the poem, Jason realized . . .

Then in my path a flash of white
And round my heels, as if to bite,
Its snowy fur and eyes of red,
A fox into the forest led.

I'm dreaming something like The Book of the Duchess . . .

I followed in the morning light
And came upon a sitting knight.
His hair was curly, black and brown;
And on his face there sat a frown.
The skin was pale and tinged with green,
And under eyes were circles seen.
Out of his mouth there verses came,
Of loss of love from some fair dame:
'Eliza, sweet, has left me, lo,
And is the cause of all my woe.
I've lost her love and fate can say
What will become of me today.
For I no longer seem to care,
Since in her eye I saw that stare
That let me know that love was gone,
And never could be counted on
To comfort me from earthly pain,
For she would ne're return again.'

When he had stopped, 'twas plane to see
That he was I, and I was he!

The knight stood up and motioned for Jason to sit . . .

'Sir,' said the knight in turn to me,
'I have a message you must see
To save your soul and give relief
From broken heart and sense of grief
Come to my castle; we shall play
A game of chess at break of day.'

Jason heard a growling behind him and turned to see the white fox bearing its teeth. .

Then dropped the night and ceased the day,
And when I turned, he'd gone away.
The fox ran past and changed its hue;
In moonlight night the fur was blue.
The eyes were sparkling diamonds now.
It stopped and barked as if to vow
Return tomorrow night again,
And knight and fox were gone `til then.

I raised my head up to the sky
and saw a hundred birds to fly.
Then in an awesome winged feat
Begin to land around my feet . . .

Jason heard the rustling of the wings and saw the birds falling toward him like leaves. He looked down and saw the leaves scurrying across the flagstone patio.

Sycamore leaves. He was standing outside the kitchen on the patio–in the light of the enormous fall moon.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Saturday was a total loss. After sitting up and shaking for most of the rest of the night, Jason was unable to do anything constructive all day. The stacks of books and files began to resemble sacrifial offerings neatly laid out on an altar. His sacrifice to what?. . . to life?. . . to Beth?

Most of the afternoon was spent just wandering around outside in the empty corn fields, but not the woods. The woods seemed creepy now. He sat outside on the bottom of the upturned iron pot that they had used to boil fresh corn-on-the-cob last summer. Nothing tastes better than corn picked and shucked and put straightway into a boiling pot. Fresh corn on the cob with butter--he could see Beth's smiling face.

He wandered into the living room and then upstairs. Standing on the top step and looking first to his right into the women's dorm and then to the left into the men's down at the rows of army surplus bunks only reminded him how truly alone he was. Toby had spent an entire winter here by himself once. How had he done it?

After dark he ate a little and decided to record his dream in the journal. There was no worry that he would forget. This dream will be with me the rest of my life, he reflected. Obviously, I need to sort this out. Maybe writing it all down will help me. . .

Oct. 12. Had a most disturbing dream last night, brought about by coming to this cabin again. I have held this place as a sort of holy fantasy of some kind--that if I could hold out and come here, I would be able to pull myself together. Don't think, don't feel--just work and break will come, and I will go to Toby's cabin, and everything will be all right.
Bad idea. I haven't gotten anything done, and I feel more alone than ever before.

Last night, I dreamt something like Chaucer's The Book of the Duchess. I'm certain it was in verse, or I thought it was. I was in the woods . . . no, I was in a tower (the kitchen loft, here I guess), and I came down. It was day (May?). I followed a fox to the woods where I encountered a lamenting knight--who was me (I?). He mourned for Eliza (Beth?) and had a warning for me. He said we would play chess at daybreak. Then I woke up outside on the patio.
I haven't been a sleepwalker since my mother died. I was in the fourth grade. They found me at the cemetery--a mile from our house.
This all has to do with Beth's leaving me at the end of summer. She won't be back. I wasn't on the right track for her, I guess. I could tell by her eyes that she wanted something, but I wasn't it.

Jason looked at the entry. Pitiful, pitiful. Would you really want someone to read this? He started to tear it out. But wait-a-minute, he thought, it was a dream, and fair is fair.

He went back to the journal. . .

Macrobius would call this a somnium animal--something from my life that is on my mind. What would Freud say?. . .sexual?. . .maybe wish fulfillment. What wish then?. . .to stop grieving over Beth? And Jung?
Perhaps just daily problems with an archetype monomyth from the collective unconscious--and a little case of sleepwalking on the side?
I tried to read some of Laplanche today, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, especially the part on the death drive (interesting idea that there is such a drive), but it all makes little sense in my current state.

Jason closed the journal, placing the pencil carefully inside to mark the next page. I wish I could write the dream while it happens, he thought. He took the pencil back out and opened the journal to the next empty page.

Having decided that it would be safer to sleep downstairs next to the stove, he snuggled down further into the sleeping bag and held the pencil in his hand. If the dream came again, he would be ready.

The stove let little reflections of light dance around the walls and ceiling. He tried to let his mind wander around in the elements of last night's dream. The knight had said for him to come to his castle . . . the fire was warm . . . warm as coals. . . red coals . . .

As red as coals were fox's eyes
as mean as snakes, as cold as lies

If only I could write it down . . .

And into dream again I sank
Upon the moss of some fair bank.

And I arose in mid of day,
Of that sweet month that's known as May
To follow fox across the glen
And to the woods, and then we in.

But as I followed fox of white,
Some awful cloud blocked out the light.
The day was gone and journey soon
Was in the dark by light of moon.

I don't like this, thought Jason, something's wrong. . .

Ahead the fox impatient grew
His bristling fur the color blue.
`The knight's ahead just follow me
He's around the corner, past that tree.'
And into wood the talking guide
Quick disappeared with fox's stride.

Hurry, Jason thought, hurry. . .don't lose him. . .

So past the tree I quickly fled
And saw the fox's eyes of red
Across the moat on rocky wall
Of castle ancient, castle tall.

"Let down the draw bridge!" Jason shouted.

As if by magic from the sky,
Down came the bridge on bank to lie.
'Come now across and you shall find
Your wish fulfilled your ease of mind.'

I've got to write this down, Jason thought. He wrote in the journal and then dropped it on the rocky bank . . .

Across the bridge I now resolved
The mystery of my journey solved
I stepped onto the wooden plank
But into it my footstep sank . . .

The shock of the forty-degree temperature caused Jason to suck in his breath deeply just as his head went under the water. The last he knew was the searing pain of cold hitting his brain.

When Toby found the journal on the rocky edge of the strip pit the next week, the last entry read:

Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life . . .

David Holcombe

Drawing by Constance M. Smutz

"How about a snack?" I asked my daughter.

"Sure, in a minute," she replied with a song in her voice.

She was taking off her shoes as she walked into the kitchen. Stopping to keep her balance had never been a thought. She is a ballerina, a pure and true dancer. Fouette', attitude, tendu, and chaine' turns--leap, leap and her shoes lie on the floor empty--one on its side, the other in a perfect position--like my daughter dancing to music only she hears, using steps only she choreographs.

Judith Staples

On Teaching: Turning Theory Into Practice

Nursing and nursing education are both presently undergoing overwhelming change and major paradigm shifts in practice. The science of nursing is expanding dramatically to meet the needs of an emerging United States population of gerontological clients and chronic home-care clients with devastating illnesses such as AIDS and to accommodate the move from hospital acute care to a more home-based, community focus of care.

Nursing education leaders are presented with two major challenges: preparing students for the dramatically changing healthcare environment of today and the rapidity of technological advances and educating the nontraditional adult learner who seeks to enter nursing. According to Dr. Carol Singer, the current president of the National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing, 65.4 percent of registered nurses each year are educated in the community college setting. Instructors must now embrace teaching methodologies that address the nontraditional student.

During the first ten years of my professional career, I focused on being a nursing administrator of acute care neonatal intensive care units with the direct responsibility of managing staff and budgetary needs. My interest grew in promoting the educational growth of my employees. In the graduate program of the University of Colorado in 1981, my focus centered on adult education in the field of maternal-child nursing and on developing nursing curriculums. Graduate nursing education was presented holistically within the framework of the school, The Science of Caring. We were taught to examine and explore the psychological, professional, and growth potential of each student.

I used this theory of nursing education to guide me in my roles as an educator and manager in promoting continual educational growth and development for large numbers of employees. When I entered community college education in 1987, I immediately discerned that the associate degree student was nontraditional compared to the generic nursing student in the four-year B.S.N. program. These nontraditional students had a wealth of life experience, previous career opportunities, and numerous family roles.

At Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, I have taught advanced senior courses in cardiology, endocrinology, and maternal-child nursing to hundreds of students. Nontraditional students are older and mature and generally have had

one or more previous careers. Many have baccalaureate degrees and, often, masters of science degrees. They have full-time employment responsibilities and family obligations which are overwhelming in most cases. They are in a role of major life transition as they depart a previous career and enter the field of nursing as a new career. These students may have major psychological, family, personal, and emotional stress consuming them as they study for the demanding career as a registered nurse.

For the past six years, I have taught cardiovascular nursing to the senior students. In planning the components of the cardiovascular course, I realized that these students would have a wide variety of previous careers and personal experiences to reflect upon as they studied the complex field of cardiology, and that the degree and level of previous health-related field experience would vary greatly from student to student.

Thus I chose a teaching approach that is recognized as a key component of the andragogical teaching methodology. As a major aspect of the course students prepare, conduct, and teach their own specifically designed community service project. On the first day of the quarter, students are reminded that they each bring to the nursing program a multitude of diverse backgrounds and expertise. One of their primary roles as a nurse will be that of client educator. On those premises, the students may select any client population and plan and present an educational program on any aspect of cardiovascular health to that specific client population. They complete their teaching project during the course; on the last class day they explain their projects and specific client population to their peers.

On the first day of class, these nontraditional adult students generally meet the requirements for a community service project with dismay. They are overwhelmed by class load, work and, often, emotional and spiritual distress. However, a dramatic metamorphosis begins to occur among the students.

I have witnessed the most amazing and remarkable projects evolve that positively influenced the lives of many people in western North Carolina. Teaching projects have been as diverse as the students themselves! Students have presented to prison populations, drug and alcohol substance abuse clients, gerontological settings, homes for physically and developmentally-challenged adults and children, secondary and primary schools, factories and businesses; one group planned and formed a community health fair for health screening for an aged population in a rural

county of western North Carolina.

The students evaluate this project as one of their most memorable and enriching experiences in their nursing program education. They derive a great sense of pride and accomplishment as they receive praise, positive feedback, and expressions of gratitude from their peers and specific client populations. Often, the students are not prepared for the sincerity and appreciation of the specific client group they select to teach. They begin to realize "This is how it must feel to be a nurse!"

In the community service projects, I have presented one facet of the andragogical teaching methodology to community college nursing education. Nontraditional adult students are able to draw from their previous experiences to become creative, provide information in a beginning professional role, and derive self-esteem from the satisfaction of teaching a specific client group!

Sharon E. Metcalfe

White Petunias

You open like old dreams
mouthing double wishes.

Oozing sweetness,
veined throat straining
pushing towards perfection,

you are an explanation for the night,
a definition of day breaking.

Yet, as you glow,
your fragrance forces some exploration
by bird or bee or foe,

and, already, the heat
is dancing in the street
with a vengeance,

inviting you to go.

Nancy Dillingham

Photograph by Shirley B. McLaughlin

EULOGY

Mr. Graham died a couple of years ago,
He was a very nice old man in the church
I attended as a child. He was old as long as I knew him.
He would listen to the preacher from the front pew,
an elderly child hanging on every blessed word,
gumming an "amen" and "you tell `em" at times.
He had no teeth but he had the strongest handshake
I have ever felt.
He told me once that he was a preacher
when he was young and strong
and that I should grow up to be one too
because I questioned the elders
of the church just like Jesus did.

Sometimes I wonder how it would've been,
a leader of the flock, watering the faithful
with their weekly guilt and redemption.
I like to think my sermons would've been guilt-lite.
Perhaps I would've gone to Fruitland--
I'd been a "ed-e-cated" preacher.
Learned the history and the truest meanings
of the Gospels & Parables.
Yes, a wise and dependable shepherd.

How would it have been to have felt the solid oak pews,
watched motes of dust slowly swirl in morning window rays
and prayed for inspiration and *trust that it would come*?
To bask in the honey glow of evening sun,
thanking Him for the work I had done?
To deliver the message from the pulpit,
The Word in one hand, a handkerchief in the other?
To gently nod and smile at screeching off-key solos,
knowing they tried their best?

I would've watched the single candles
flicker in the windows and smelled
the fruit and candy in the crackling goody bags at Christmas time--
Spent bleary-eyed nights in scripture and prayer--
Thanked Him for the privilege of standing
near His door as babies come and old ones go--
felt noble wrapping reason round every tragedy,
handing it to the victim with a bow tie on top:
"tis for a higher purpose than we can know."
Cast a safety net of prayer over my lambs
and felt the sacred and dirty baptismal waters on my hands--
Had someone to thank for the good and blame for the bad.

I think I would've liked it.
I could never have told Mr. Graham how
I cast complacency to the stars
and placed my trust in scattered grains of sand.

Will Hooper

THE DAY JULIA QUINTRELL TOOK TO THAT GREAT HIGHWAY OF LIFE ON THE BACK OF A HARLEY DAVIDSON

I am sitting in a corner booth in Sam's Diner hidden from the view of other customers enjoying a leisurely lunch and going over the list of preparations for my friend Julia Quintrell's wedding tomorrow to make sure we haven't forgotten anything when I hear Julia's name mentioned at the next booth and even though I can't see the face I immediately recognize the voice of Mamie Daniels whose grandnephew Virgil works in the clerk-of-court's office regaling the others at her table with the fact that Julia took out a marriage license yesterday with her intended bridegroom who brought them to the courthouse on that mean-looking motorcycle of his but before she can finish what she's saying Edith Everhardt chimes in with the fact that this intended bridegroom of Julia's is the same biker from Hell named Thor Mason who had placed an ad in the personal columns of newspapers all over the country describing himself as "a devil in disguise looking for an angel to share a seat on his Harley Davidson motorcycle on a trip down that great highway of life" and Julia was crazy enough to answer that ad and did you know that he has a snake tattoo on his left forearm interrupts Betty Brownlee and I guess we shouldn't be too surprised at Julia's strange behavior because she was cooped up in that gloomy old house for the last fifteen years with just her daddy crazy old Colonel Zachary Quintrell for company and suddenly when he died last year at eighty years of age she was left alone with no kin or husband at age thirty-five and she didn't know what to do with herself and taking up the conversation Francie Edwards allows how there were always rumors of a strain of madness running through the Quintrell family but that Julia probably won't have the time to go completely mad because that biker will probably kill her and mutilate her body and leave the pieces where they'll never be found and that it makes her blood run cold just thinking about it whereas I sitting hidden in my booth am flushed with the effort it is taking to keep from bursting out laughing at the preposterous tale these ladies are spinning because you see Julia is not the least bit crazy and she's not running off to her impending death with Satan's son although he does ride a motorcycle and he did have a snake tattoo painted on his left forearm for a time while he researched one of his novels but rather she's going to marry in a private ceremony in the stately parlor of her ancestral home a perfectly wonderful man who is a romance writer that she met at a Romance Writers of America Convention last year in Atlanta that she attended just as she has been attending for several years because she may be a little naive and a bit too romantic for her own

good but she's not some poor pathetic creature even though she's had tragedy in her life but who hasn't in that her mother died when she was twelve and her daddy being older and a retired colonel was rather strict and intimidating so that she didn't have that many fellas coming to call on her making her an easy mark for that gigolo who came into town when she was eighteen but she saw through him before he could convince her to elope with him and he didn't deflower her and cause her to have a nervous breakdown when he took off and she didn't have to be committed to a mental institution up North but rather she just started classes that fall at the women's college she'd always planned to attend and she stayed there until she graduated and then she came home and started work on the book her daddy always wanted written about his exploits with the French freedom fighters during World War II and after she and the Colonel finished his book she decided to try and write a romance novel about wartime lovers and soon she became a very prolific and successful romance writer but of course she wrote these books under an assumed name because she didn't want a lot of publicity and thought the town might not approve and it probably wouldn't because personally I think the town has always been a little jealous of the Quintrells because they have such a rich cultural heritage and have lived for generations in that huge mansion on the hill overlooking the town so I am not going to bother to try and enlighten these fine ladies of the community about the true nature of Julia's wedding and the fine gentleman she is marrying because they would just concoct some other elaborate scenario wherein this Thor Mason is some sexual pervert who wants to marry a naive girl like Julia Quintrell and turn her into his sex slave so that he can use her in some immoral plots for those romance books of his.

Sandra Dillingham

Drawing by Constance M. Smutz

Drawing by Constance M. Smutz

ATLANTIC BEACH

Sometimes
Salvation comes
With a pocketful of seashells
Gathered
In the ebbing tide of morning

While
The seagulls
Hang motionless in the wind
Like angels
Transfixed
By the presence of God

David Holcombe
March 1995

Providence

"Women have no wilderness in them,
They are provident instead,
Content in the tight hot cell of their hearts . . ."
Louise Bogan

I

Her skin, like paper that has been folded many times and carried in someone's pocket like an ancient memory to be taken out and looked at again and again - - dry, brittle, creased with fine wrinkles - - is thin to the point of transparency, and, as she talks, a blue vein on her high forehead pulsates. When one of her hands (soft and tiny, with fingers like thin, pink sacs) suddenly flutters through the air to make a point and accidently brushes against one of the reporter's, it is hot to the touch - - her heart beating, it seems, in her hand.

Although the voice, rising as her fingers flutter, is surprisingly strong for someone her age, the earnest young man thinks how fragile she looks with her wisps of gray hair above that high forehead. He is reminded of the time many years ago when he stood on tiptoe cautiously peering at some small birds in their nest, their defenselessness overwhelming him - - their eyes big and sightless, their mouths open, their bodies (featherless except for some soft, gray fuzz here and there) pink and pulsating. . .

II

Her bare toes dig into the soft, sandlike dirt, little puffs of it rising and falling delicately before her as she walks up the lane. The big house stands at the end of the lane, a formidable awaiting.

She goes up the steps to the front door, lifts her arm, raises the heavy door knocker, and brings it down hard. The noise is so loud that she jumps back. The door is jerked open, and shiny boots (not
creased and mud-caked like those of her father) rise toward a tall figure in a frock coat with heavy, black brows flecked with gray. She looks up into the face. "My daddy sent me," she says in a clear, resolute voice. She is eleven years old.

III

She stands plaiting her younger sister's hair, feeling the smooth silkiness of the long, shiny, cream-colored strands slipping through her fingers as she laces them in and out.

Her father stands in front of the fireplace, his elbows resting on the mantel, his head bowed. Although she can't see his face, she knows that, if she could, it would hold a look she has seen many times before - - one of desperation. His voice is low and too calm as he speaks. "I can't pay the big house," he says. Her mother, scraping potatoes in the kitchen, suddenly stops, and the girl imagines in the quiet that the swishing of the hair through her fingers makes the only discernible noise - - except, perhaps, for her father's heart.

Later, as they sit down to fried potatoes and cornbread, her father speaks again in that voice, measured and controlled. "This land is all we've got. If we lose it, we'll be out in the big road. I was counting on the corn for payment this year. But this drought . . ." He shakes his head, and his voice trails off. Then her father suddenly looks at her. "The Man has offered to take you in place of the payment. He has promised to take care of you and to be good to you until you are sixteen." He takes a deep breath "Then he wants to marry you." She feels faint and sick as she hears her father continue. "This family, of course, will make the decision together. Your mother and I couldn't bear the thought of losing you, but I think it would kill us all to lose this land after we've given the best years of our lives to it." His voice gives out suddenly, but he continues to look at her, the oldest child in the family.

IV

The man with the heavy, black brows with the flecks of gray in them takes her into the house and cares for her. The first day he leads her around the staircase into the dining room. He puts one arm carefully on her shoulder and speaks to the woman who is serving lunch. "Get her some food and then see to it that she has clothes and shoes." The woman nods and takes her into the kitchen where she eats her meals for the next four years.

When she is fifteen, she is served her meals in the dining room with him. They eat at opposite ends of the table. At first, he eats as if only he were there. Then he begins to look at her and, finally, to talk to her, formally at first, offering only pleasantries. She observes that he looks at her directly only when he is silent, never when he talks. Instead, he looks at the clock mounted on the wall just above her head as if he were waiting for time to pass.

On the eve of her sixteenth birthday, she hears his footsteps stop at her door instead of going on down the hall to his room. She listens as he opens the door slowly and closes it gently behind him. She is not surprised, for she has been awaiting this moment for five years now. Wordlessly and deliberately, it seems, he

sits down on the edge of the bed, takes off his boots, and drops them on the floor with a soft thud.

Sometime later, just as deliberately, he puts his boots back on in the darkness and leaves. He has not spoken a word. She listens until she hears his door close and sees in her mind the practiced motions as he sits on his own bed and drops his shoes to the floor. She hears the mattress sink with a little sigh as he slings his weight onto it. Only then does she put down the covers and open the curtains for the moon to come in. She lies until dawn on top of the covers, letting only the moon's rays touch her, their cool comfort cradling her. Over the years, the moon has become her best friend, bringing to her, in her fantasies, as it does tonight, members of her family with whom she talks until dawn.

The next day, on her sixteenth birthday, he marries her as he had promised her father.

V

Until the day he dies, he never sleeps all night in her bed. But one night (as he lies on the opposite side of the bed before he rises to put on his boots to leave), out of desperation -- after years of silence and because she is drowning -- she reaches out and hears her voice calling his name. It becomes an incantation as she whispers it over and over again. Only then does she know that she can survive.

Later, after he has gone to his room, she opens up the curtains and only the moon's clear light shines in. The shadowy forms of her family have now dissolved forever; she hears in her mind only the sound of her own voice calling his name over and over again.

VI

Still, there are many kinds of silence. During the following years, she has seven children, all of them stillborn except the last. Each time, she is deathly sick. Each time she feels the life flow prematurely from her body, helpless to do anything to hold it back.

The last one, the one that lives for a short time, has no eyelashes or fingernails. She feeds it with a medicine dropper and warms it with a big rock, heated and wrapped in a blanket. She holds it in her arms and watches it die, covering its face with a cloth dipped in camphor, rocking it until the doctor comes. For years afterward, she can't bear the smell of camphor.

VII

That fateful day burns in her mind like a struck match. She is doing the wash in a big, black pot hung over a smoldering fire. She has just picked up the wooden stick leaning to one side of the pot to poke and stir the boiling clothes, the steam wetting her face, when she sees him coming up the lane. Immediately she knows something is wrong because he never comes out of the fields until lunch time: he comes in through the kitchen, washes up at the sink, wets and combs his hair in the little glass hanging by the window, goes into the dining room, takes out his pocket watch, winds it, and checks its time against the big clock on the wall over the table, then sits down to eat. But today he is here in the morning, and something is wrong.

She drops the stick, wiping her face with her apron, walking toward him, quickening her pace until she is running. He, too, is walking faster now, though his gait is uncharacteristically unsteady. Coming closer now, she sees that his face is red and that he is gasping for breath. He reaches out one arm jerkily towards her and tries to speak. In the instant before his body hits hers, she notices that his face is contorted and that one side is curiously slack. He falls heavily on her. The impact jolts, threatening to knock her down, the body still lean and muscular. Out of breath and struggling, she gets him the rest of the way up the lane and into the house. From that day on, he never again speaks a word or takes a step.

VIII

She stands under one large tree, dwarfed by its height, her hair pulled up high on her head, her hands clasping the back of a shiny, arched, wooden chair on wheels. He sits in the chair, immobile. She is thirty-six years old; he is sixty. The photographer, catching the best light of the day, covers his head with the black cloth, peers at them through his box, and squeezing the ball in his hand, snaps the photograph with a small explosion.

IX

She speaks his name softly, from habit now, as she wheels him out onto the side porch. The morning air is fresh. She positions him beside the railing where she has set his breakfast bowl. She holds his face with one hand and feeds him with the other. His face is as closed now as it was fifty years ago when she first came up the lane, and she has perhaps just as many questions now as she had then. But it is a familiar lane and face now, and she knows the planes of each. His silence is a steady companion now. With a practiced hand, whispering his name over and over

again, she cajoles him into eating. The wind carries his name down the lane, blowing it away with the little puffs of dirt.

Sometime later, before the clock's hands point straight up, the wind takes his breath away, carries it, too, down the lane, and scatters it over the land.

X

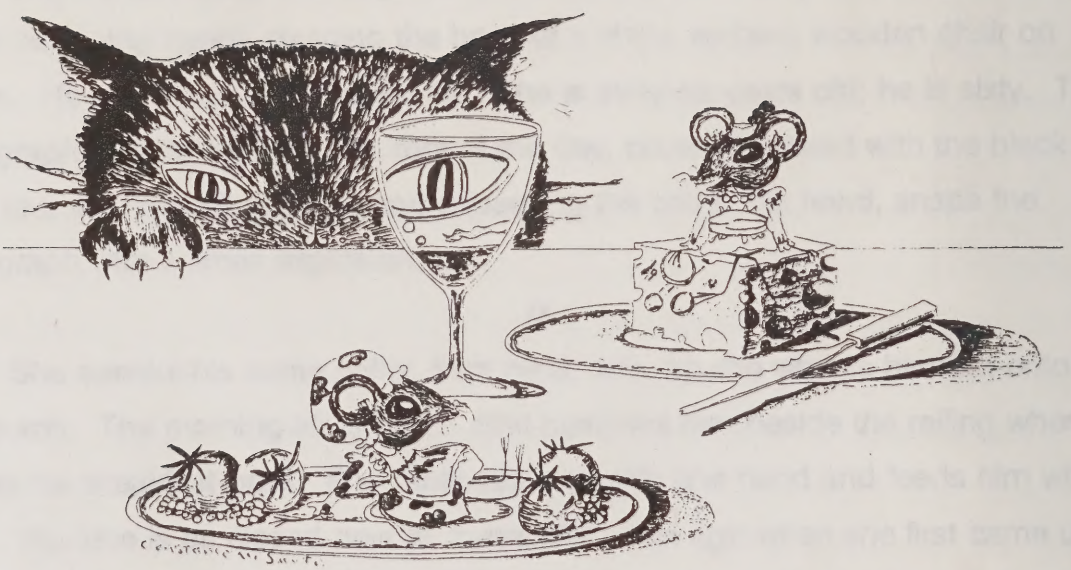
The voice is whispery now, like a quiet wind through the room. The house smells of ripe apples and old newspaper. It is late, and the shadows of the trees play with the curtains. She fingers the photograph. The sleek, empty glasses stand on the tray in little puddles, having long since shed their frosty wetness. The visit has come to an end. She rises and walks the young reporter out. Through the screen door she calls a farewell, her voice once again clear and strong. As he turns, he sees her silhouetted against the light from the big windows at the other end of the house, the hall long and narrow before her.

Nancy Dillingham

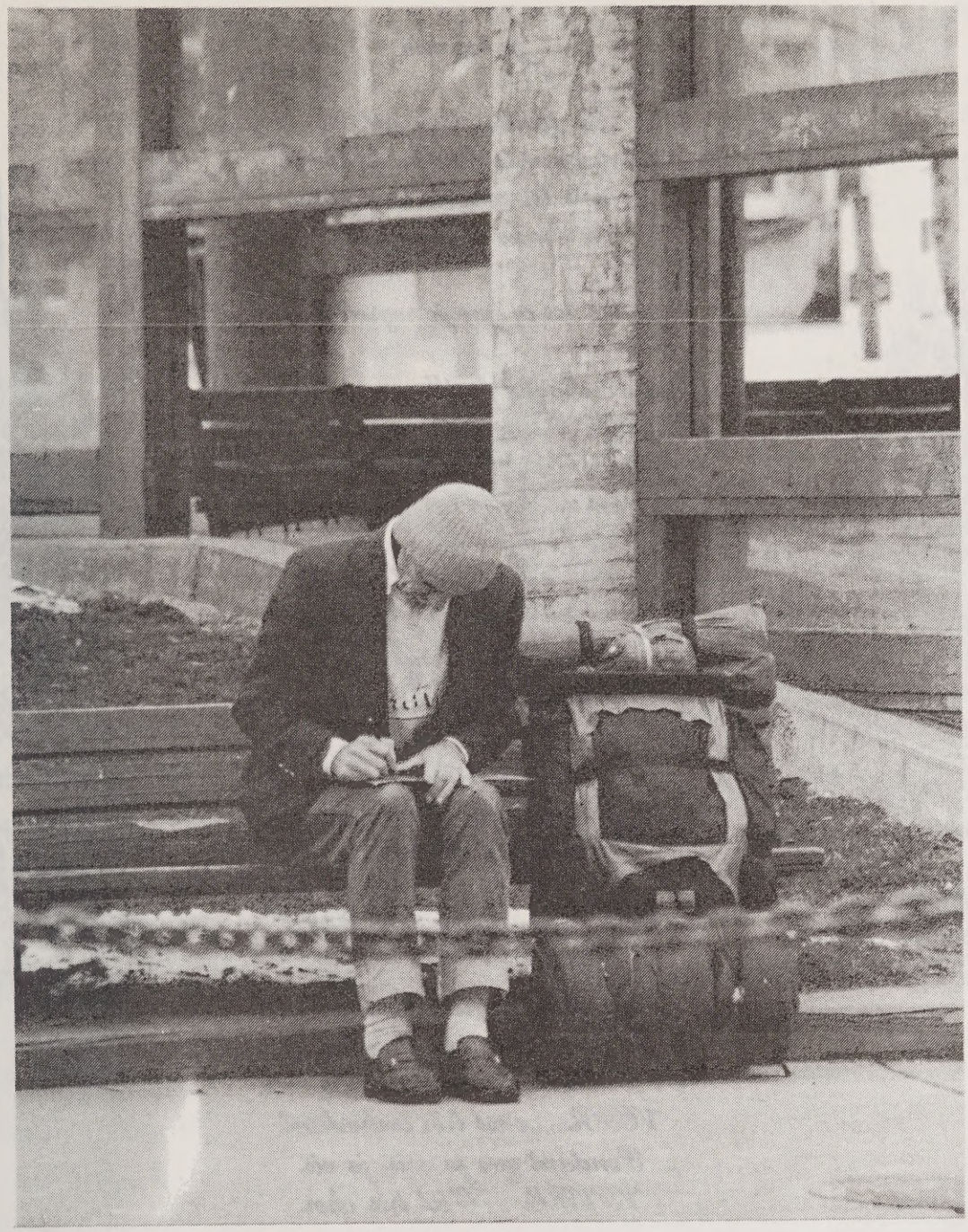
Limerick for the
End of the Quarter

It so happened at old A-B Tech
That a teacher became quite a wreck:
He had graded exams
Til he gave out of "damns,"
And he'd never learned how to say
"heck."

Gene Norton



Drawing by Constance M. Smutz



Photograph by Lee Schleining

Je regrette

Les feuilles tombent. . .
Et des autres feuilles tombent.
Je vois les rouges, les jaunes,
les bruns et je regrette.

Qu'est-ce que je regrette?

Avec chaque feuille que je vois,
je regrette qu'une autre année a passé
Avec chaque feuille je pense
que c'est un autre an que j'ai passé
de la vie. . .de ma vie.
Les feuilles sont ma vie.

Les feuilles rouges. . .
les moments les plus contents. . .
peut-être la jeunesse.
Les feuilles jaunes. . .
les moments plus pensatifs. . .
peut-être la mort.

Mais c'est vrai que je regrette?

Non, je ne regrette pas la vie.
Je ne regrette pas l'automne.
Si je retrette, je ne peux pas voir.
VOIR. . .c'est très important.
Pendant que je vois, je vis.
VIVRE. . .C'est très cher.

Je vois, je vis et
je ne regrette pas.

Teresa Kennedy

Drawing by Constance M. Smutz

The Altar Call

When I was eight years old, my parents sent me to a Baptist church camp in east Tennessee. I don't know if they were Free Will, Primitive, Missionary, hard shell, soft shell, or just plain Southern Baptists.

My family belonged to a staid Methodist congregation in Nashville, where old women wore white gloves and went to weekly church circles. Sometimes I accompanied my grandmother to circle meetings. The ladies read their weekly lesson from The Guiding Light and then discussed how to apply Jesus's teachings in their own lives. They opened their Bibles and underlined the verses from their lesson. I listened while I sat on a metal stool-fan watching my gathered skirt billow up, feeling the cool breeze on my legs. I daydreamed, waiting for the refreshments to be served. My favorite was crescent-shaped shortbread cookies with a white dusting of powdered sugar which I licked off my fingers. After we drank punch and ate cookies, the ladies put on their hats and one of my grandmother's friends drove us home.

Along with Sunday School classes, these circles were my first experience of religion. In Sunday School, we covered frozen orange juice cans with Contact paper. I gave mine to my mother to use as a pen holder on the telephone table in the hallway. We also sprouted sunflower seeds in paper cups in the classroom window sill. I was in the third graders' Sunday School class. My brother Scott was in the fifth graders' class. His teachers told them stories of Jesus making lame men walk and blind men see and David killing a giant and Eve talking to a snake. One Sunday he came home from Sunday School and asked our father, "Do these people really believe those stories they tell?" To this day, he remains a skeptic.

After Sunday School, we went to the 11:00 service. Scott and I sat quietly through the sermon, drawing on the paper our mother gave us or leafing through the hymnals, trying not to squirm and shuffle too loudly. I bolted straight up from my reverie when the sermon was over and the congregation stood to sing hymns. "Blessed Assurance" was my father's favorite hymn, but he said Methodists put him to sleep with their listless singing. He missed the Church of Christ he had grown up in, where there were no sinful pianos or organs, but the congregation shouted out the songs. He went to the Methodist church now to keep peace with his mother-in-law. (My grandmother never approved of my mother marrying that boy from the other side of Cumberland River, with his lower class religion where they drank wine, not grape juice, at communion.) After the singing, the collection plate was passed. My brother

and I each put a dime in the plate. My mother had put her money in an offering envelope at home and it joined the other envelopes in the plate. After the benediction and the Doxology, the service was over. The congregation walked quietly out the front door, shaking hands with the minister and greeting each other. Back at my grandmother's house, the women returned their hats to their boxes and then went to the kitchen to make dinner, another quiet Methodist Sunday dinner, with fresh mint for the ice tea and yeast rolls from the oven.

My aunt and mother drove Scott, my cousin, and me the three hours from Nashville to the camp. How innocently I thrilled at the camp scenery -- the rolling green hills, the stream dammed into a small lake, the fresh scented trees. I could be happy here for much longer than a week. Our mothers helped us unload our suitcases and then hugged us goodbye. I looked beyond my mom to the hill tops, longing to race right up them.

As soon as our mothers drove away, the counselors marched us to our cabins and instructed us in making up beds. I had been proudly making up my own bed since I was four years old, but not in the correct, Baptist way. Our counselor Margie taught us to tug the scratchy green wool Army blankets tight to each side and shove the ends snugly under the mattress. Then she made us drop a dime in the middle of the bed. If it bounced, we had done a good job. Just like in Army boot camp. We were in a boot camp of sorts, a boot camp for Christian soldiers. Every morning that week, Margie inspected our beds before allowing us to leave for the dining hall. One morning, she found a pair of underpants under my bed and held them up for all the campers in the cabin to see. "Whose are these?" My scalp prickled; my fingers tingled; my face burned hot; I stared at my feet and mumbled, "They're mine. I guess I didn't see them fall out of my suitcase." I would never fit in. I couldn't even keep my space in the cabin as clean as a Baptist child could.

Before breakfast on the third morning, Margie led us to sit by the lake for morning Bible study. At home, the first thing we did every day was eat breakfast; I wasn't used to paying attention on an empty stomach. While the teacher read, I tried to hold my head up straight and listen. The reading was of Jesus telling his disciples that in his father's house there are many mansions. I dreamily wondered how many mansions could squeeze into a house. My parents had taken me to see Andrew Jackson's Hermitage and I knew even one mansion of that size couldn't fit in our house. Well, maybe it could fit into my grandmother's boardinghouse, but that wasn't

really a house, was it? Maybe the mansions in houses didn't make sense because I was still sleepy. Then the teacher told about the pearly gates and golden streets of Heaven where Christians spent eternity walking up and down the golden streets. But I didn't want to walk up and down streets; I only wanted to lay my head on my knees and sleep. I never wanted to go to Heaven if it meant walking for eternity. Heaven had to be delicious sleeping. Or at least walking in those beautiful hills that we campers were too busy to visit.

I was a terrible Baptist. I excelled only in canoeing and riflery. My father had taught me to canoe at Boy Scott camp, where he was the summer waterfront director. Canoeing was one thing I could do well as a Baptist. I loved climbing into the canoe ("Keep your weight low.") and paddling it out to the middle of the lake. I showed off my advanced knowledge by using a J-stroke. I watched the water dripping off the tip of the paddle, only slightly questioning what canoeing had to do with memorizing Bible verses. Maybe it had something to do with becoming "fishers of men." My other pride was earning a badge in riflery. I loved lying on the cool, moist ground, my arms around the rifle, sighting the target with its concentric circles. I don't think I really loved the gun; I just loved doing something better than a Baptist. I never won one of the tiny New Testament prizes for memorizing the most Bible verses or the names of all the books in the Old or New Testament. I had been too busy covering orange juice cans and sprouting sunflower seeds to memorize anything.

Except for showing off my canoeing and riflery, I spent the week at camp trying to be invisible. I knew I didn't belong there, but I hoped no one else noticed. This strategy fell completely apart during the Altar Call on the last night of camp.

At any summer camp, all the activity and emotion of the week culminate in the final night. At Boy Scout camp, I was used to the swearing in of new Scouts into the Order of the Arrow, the Indian canoeing down the river in the moonlight, the bonfire that magically flamed up to the sky with only one match. The mystery fascinated and thrilled me. And so, even though I had been miserable all week, I looked forward to the final night.

The preacher began by reviewing the good Christian education we had received that week and told us to take it with us when we went home. If we knew anyone who wasn't a Christian, it was our duty to tell them about Jesus so they wouldn't go to hell. He reviewed some of the Bible verses we had studied. And then he started the Altar Call, something I had never seen in our Methodist church. "If any

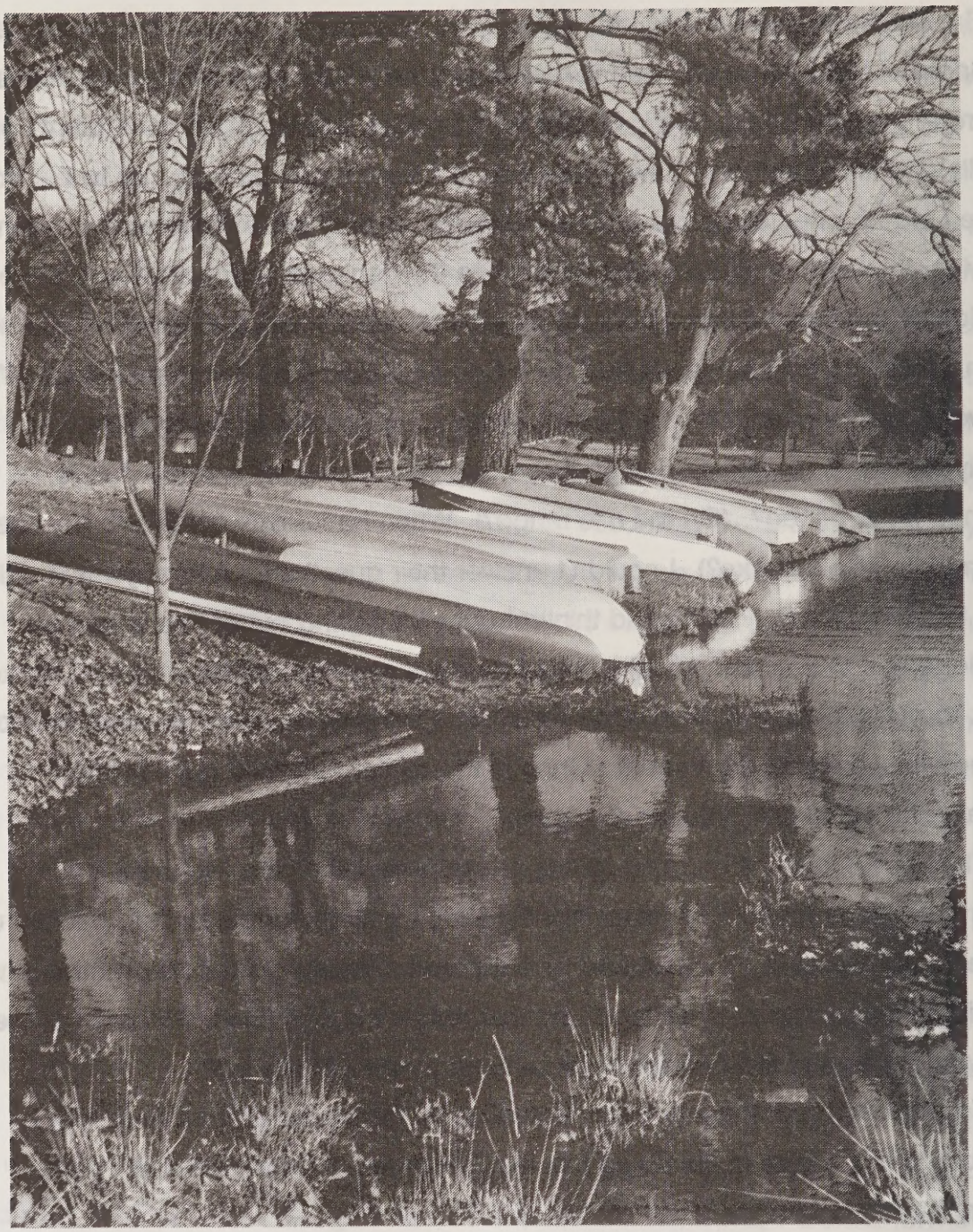
of you has accepted Jesus as your Savior this week, please come forward to the altar." I thought he meant that anyone who was a Christian should come forward. Methodists believed in Jesus, so I walked right up to the altar.

But something was wrong. Why was I the only one up there? Why hadn't all those Baptists come forward? Hadn't they spent the whole week talking about Jesus and weren't they Christians, too? Of course they were, but they had seen plenty of altar calls and knew that only newly saved souls were supposed to go up to the front. So there I stood, once again out of step. I waited numbly while the preacher finished the service, thinking I could run quickly back to the cabin as soon as he was done. But suddenly the entire congregation thronged the new Christian at the altar. Some cried (in public!); some congratulated me. Congratulated me? I was mortified. What in the world had I done? Me, the Methodist who only wanted to be invisible, suddenly the center of attention of all those Baptists. Everyone wanted details. Where had it happened? (On the rifle range?) When had Jesus come into my heart? (In the middle of a J-stroke?) I couldn't answer their questions. And anyway, I didn't want to talk to anybody. All I could think about was getting out of that crowd and being alone and unnoticed. Finally, our counselors gathered us together and walked us back to our cabins. I walked off to the side of the group while they chatted about the wonderful week they had spent. Once in the cabin, I crawled quickly into bed before anyone could congratulate me again.

Thankfully, the final morning at camp was uneventful. We ate breakfast, cleaned our cabins (I checked especially carefully for all my underpants.), packed our suitcases, and waited in the main hall for our parents to pick us up. My mother and aunt arrived right on time. I ran to my mother, threw my suitcase in the back of the station wagon, scrambled into the back seat, and yelled, "Let's go!"

To this day, I can't quote Bible verses or list the books of the Bible. But I always buy orange juice in cans and just last Saturday, my husband and I planted sunflower seeds to sprout on our window sill.

Lee Sokol



Photograph by Shirley B. McLaughlin

Heartstrings

A single feather
painted with reds like clay,
mushroom browns,
beetle blacks
descends on invisible cushions
towards earth.

Thin leather thongs secure the ridged talons
onto the wooden ledge,
claws sharp
like a two-edged sword,
to open prey.
Blinders hide the world from his view
as discipline gives orders of the day.
The mask hides windows,
of green and brown waiting
for the light.
Hands remove the darkness.
Specks of movement
dart into view then vanish
beyond the horizon.

Then he hears it--

A cry, something stirs,
primal and deep
a quickened pulse,
and fluttering wings.
He struggles--
shackled to duty,
discipline, and restraint.
Hands remove his leather chains.

She circles high above him,
calling him to come.

The perch is now empty.
The hawk's blood races towards freedom.

They fly--pumping against invisible waves.
They rise--
Wingtips touching as they climb higher, higher, higher still.
They soar--
In exaltation on the breath of God.
Single souls--
sharing the same space and time.
Ecstasy!

Bobbie Pell

Elvis

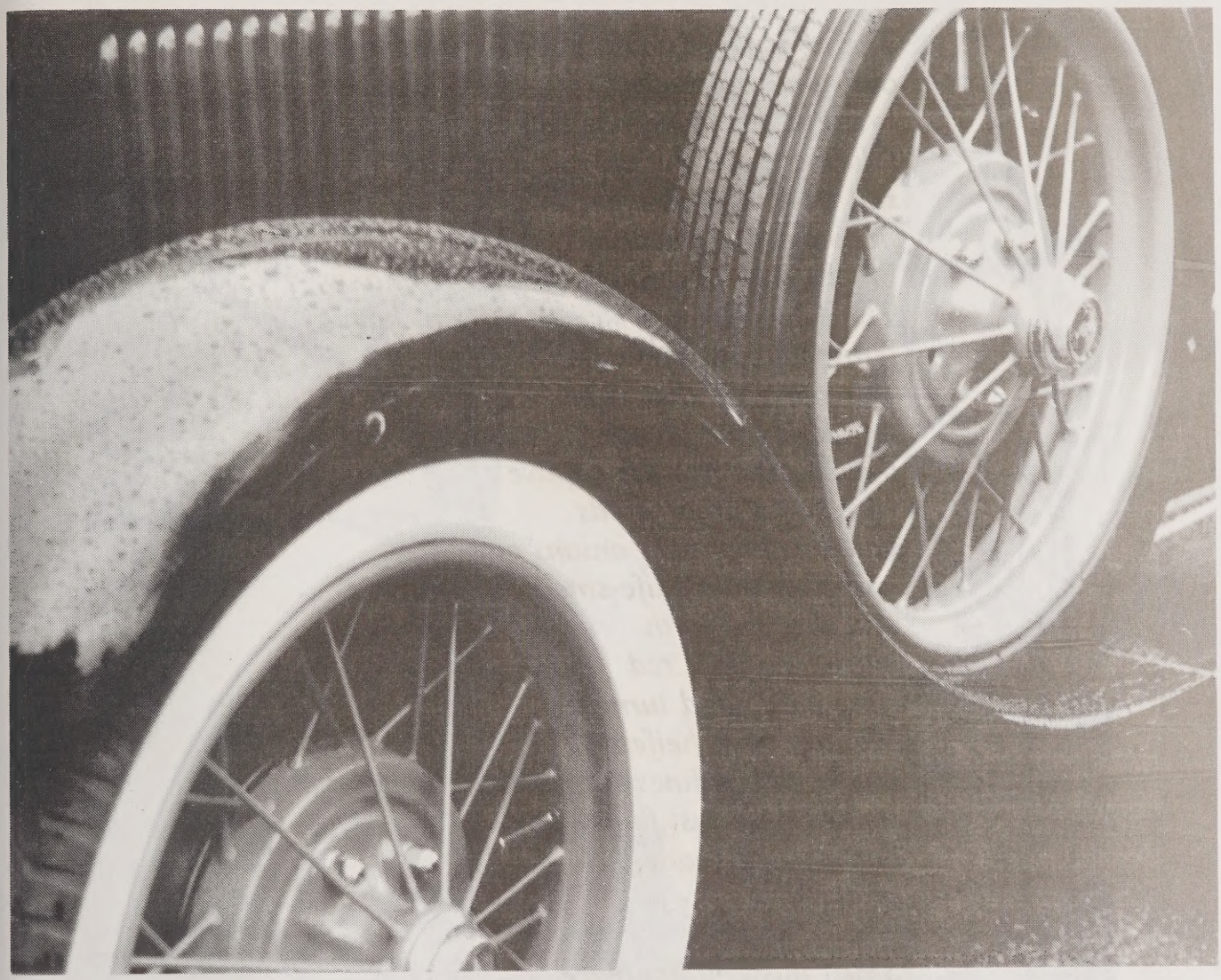
We search
for you in all
the green mornings

You step out
of the fog
to greet us

Lush eyes
lusting hungrily
you drift towards us

heart drumming
dripping in black leather
as the sun comes up

Nancy Dillingham



Photograph by Shirley B. McLaughlin

Untitled

The new paved road and my little Honda--
odd time machines
to carry this aging boy back.
Gliding down the unlined asphalt,
still steaming--as night falls--
from the day's heat.
Smells drift in through the open window.
The drunken child's sweet wet cut hay
fermenting in layers along the road.
The sultry tar that grips
and holds the breath
then shakes free the captive
with sweet other winds
and smells of wild onions cut
and river mud's life-smell
and the ripe earth
black, grey and red
lying fertile and turned.
Manure from heifers
mixed with softness of plowed ground
soaked with just fallen dew
darkens the shades
of earth.

Smell this country place
that tricks you back to boy days,
and smells of sweet-blonde, sweating heads
musky children's bodies,
that run to dinners
of gravied ham
biscuits
corn field beans
and fried tomatoes.

Roy McGinnis

Photograph by Shirley B. McLaughlin

On the Passing of My Aunt

So --
this is what it comes to --
sitting in the Burger King
on a rainy morning --
writing an obituary
on the back of a cash register receipt
for
a ham croissant,
hash browns,
and coffee.

And --
all the love, angst, tears
and
laughter
no longer live
but
are as still
and flat
as the raindrop

fallen from the sky --
its speed and direction
absorbed
into the amorphous puddle.

And
so pass --
one by one --
the loved ones of our life --
fallen like the raindrops
into the puddle called Earth --
as if they never were.
Just
an untrustworthy memory --
selected scenes in a carefully made plot --
avoiding the whole story . . .

For
only we
know our own stories.
Others
see their own plot in our lives --

the experienced encounters
with one another --
the selected episodes.

And
our own knowledge of our story
is tainted --
postmodern --
for we lie.

Only
God
sees
us
with the omniscient point of view.
He
is our audience.

Only
He
can analyze our play
and
name the genre.

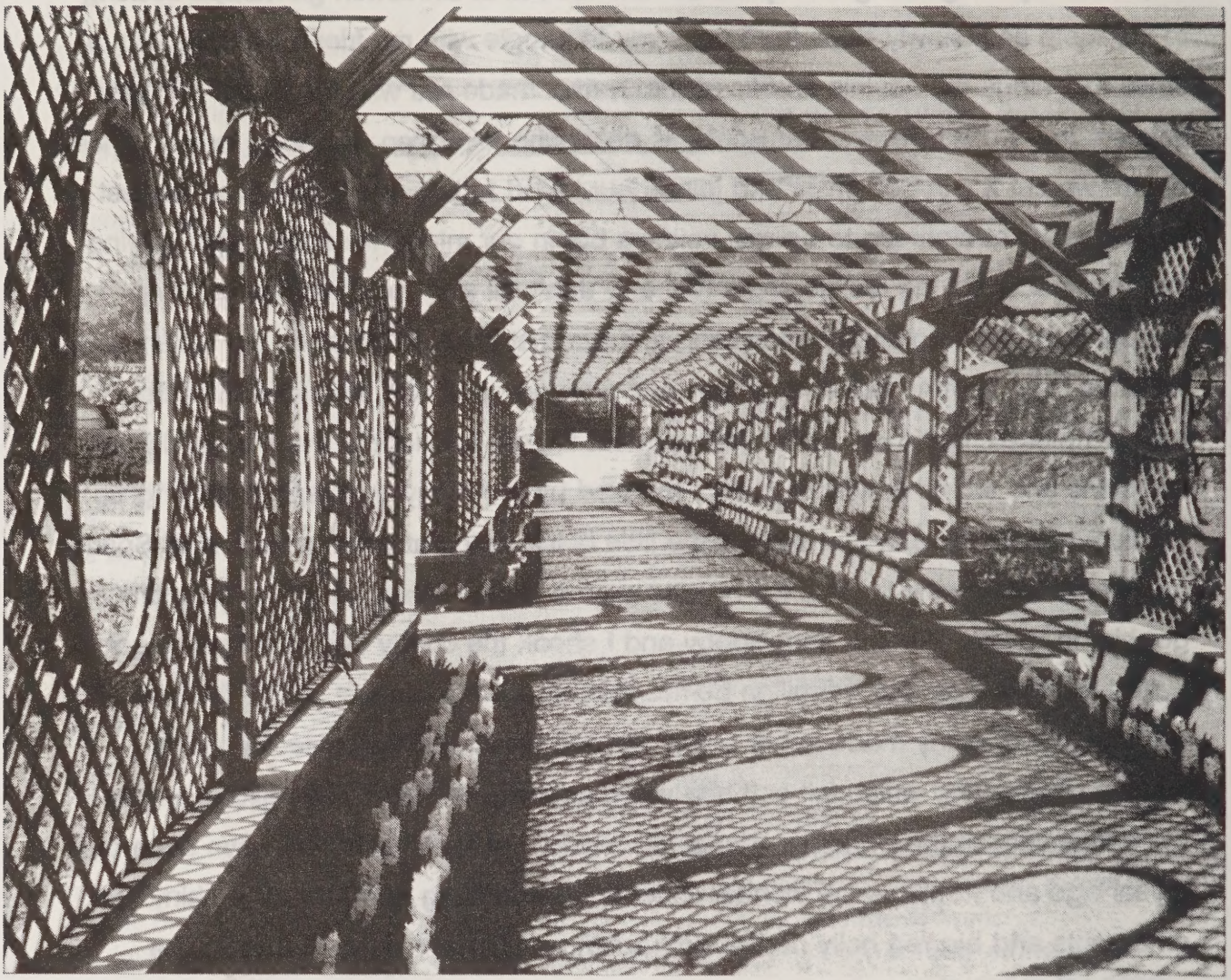
So --
this is
what it comes to --
carrying a pitiful handful of words
on the back of a cash register receipt
to the funeral home
on a rainy morning
to put in the paper
to represent--a life.

D.G. Holcombe
c 1995

RED

As I lie mortally wounded on a muddy, clay battlefield in a foreign land the blood stickily coagulating on my hands reminds me of cinnamon gumdrops sticking to my teeth as it slowly drips from my body to mingle with my friend Bobby's with a smell that clogs my nostrils and flows into a river made red with the blood of many soldiers and I can't believe that Bobby is dead who has been my friend forever since before we cut X's in our wrists and joined our blood to become blood brothers just as we joined up at eighteen to be real soldiers but in our minds were really still playing toy soldiers where the bullets aren't real and don't kill and the bayonets don't rip through a human stomach eviscerating just like that knife sliced open the watermelon we stole from Tommy Brown's garden and popped open and ate those succulent crimson pieces right there in the field with our fingers and let the warm juice drip off our chins and trickle down our chests bronzed by too many days spent soaking up the fiery rays of the sun and we spit the little black seeds at each other and at Sparky for Sparky was surely there since he was such a faithful little mutt which sometimes got him in trouble like that time Bobby and I shook the cherry tree and Sparky got pelted by those luscious vermilion berries raining down a blanket of red like the crimson cloud Jenny made in her velvet dress whose color was reflected in her flushed cheeks and which felt soft and warm against my arms as we glided across the dance floor at the Christmas dance our senior year but could that have been only a year ago and it makes me wonder if Jenny is decorating right now with shiny red ornaments and big red holly berries and putting a brilliant scarlet ribbon on the winding staircase and making some of her famous fudge which makes my mouth water just thinking about that creamy chocolate melting slowly on my tongue and telling all my taste buds that here is something to really get excited about but I can't get too excited because my entire body is starting to burn with a fire so hot that I am taken back to that time that Bobby and I spent all day on a raft like Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn and got such a terrible sunburn that our skins were as red as pickled beets and our dispositions were just as sour because we were in such pain and if I could move I am afraid that what little blood I have left might spew forth like molten lava shooting from an erupting volcano but please forget the red roses because they are too funereal and their petals remind me of drops of blood.

Sandra Dillingham



Photograph by Lee Schleining

Untitled

One dark and Georgia night you came to me
through black-green sweetness of window honeysuckles
and promised things and dreams we could not keep
though we both pulled together
and waited for the changes that love would bring
lying sweetly together with dripping tongues of fire
to each other
we were ripe to die in arms of flesh in the warm moon
beneath the cascading stars
one dark and Georgia night
we fell both into the other's heart
and falling still
we sing to death's cold door
and walking warm
into the fire of life
we sing songs
only we can hear.

Roy McGinnis

Photograph by Joe Franklin

ATLAS

It has been several years since my aunt died. My job as a photojournalist takes me all over the world, so I do not get back to my hometown very often. I have come to visit her grave on the anniversary of her death. Seeing her name on the headstone sends thoughts and images of her rushing through my mind, and I am transported back to the days when I was growing up and she used to regale me with her secret fantasies and dreams. Her insatiable curiosity and sense of adventure made me crave the excitement she could only dream about.

It is ironic that her name was Atlas--an atlas is a book of maps describing places all over the world--yet she never traveled farther than the nearest town. Maybe it was because of her name that she was a dreamer, always yearning to travel and know more about the world. But whatever the reason, she was always daring and impulsive. For example, once she climbed out a bedroom window to go see the traveling circus and could later be seen in the moonlight walking along the edge of the roof like a trapeze artist on a highwire. No wonder Authur Taylor had such an easy time persuading her to elope when he gave her those bright red, two-dollar, store-bought shoes with the shiny silver buckles. They were the most beautiful shoes she had ever seen, and it was the most romantic overture anyone had ever made toward her. She did not realize at the time that, as he knew her fondness for bright colors, it was a calculated action to sway her to his way of thinking.

Atlas was from a large, poor, and rather harsh family and had to share a room with two sisters, sleeping cramped in a bed with a hard, straw tick for a mattress. Having no privacy at home, she used to spend hours down by the spring, lying on her back in the soft, green moss, listening to the gentle cascading of the water over the rocks, dreaming of the day when she would be sitting on plush velvet divans in the midst of colorful walls papered in a tiny, spring print, lacy white curtains on the windows, luxuriating in late, uninterrupted sleep in huge feather beds--no more pokes in the ribs from her two sisters' elbows or fingers in the eyes. Gazing at her reflection in the water, she didn't see the rather impish and laughing face of a thirteen-year-old girl, but rather that of the person she imagined herself to be in the future--a striking woman with hair piled upon her head and soft curls tumbling over her shoulders, wearing a vivid red, satin dress, huge diamond earrings, scarlet lipstick, entertaining interesting guests at large dinner parties. Perhaps she'd be an actress on the big

stage and let all her male admirers give her expensive gifts.

So, shortly after her sixteenth birthday, when Mr. Arthur Taylor came calling with his gift of the flashy red shoes and a proposal of marriage, her romantic ideas about life caused her to view Mr. Taylor as Santa Claus come to grant all her wishes. Therefore, she welcomed his proposal and climbed out the window to elope with him the following night.

They went to see the justice of the peace, who muttered a few words in a bored voice and pronounced them man and wife. After they signed their names to the marriage paper, Mr. Taylor took Atlas to his rough-hewn cabin and they set up housekeeping--no honeymoon for them, not even a courtship. The brutishness of the wedding night caused her to see Author Taylor in a real light for the first time, her eyes no longer clouded with romantic illusions. He had a rather anemic complexion, square fingers, thinning hair, no sense of humor and even less imagination and sensitivity.

From the very beginning, they lived in a disconnected union. His mule ate up her roses, and he plowed up her lilacs to make room for the tobacco patch. She wanted colorful walls and lace curtains to cheer up their dreary cabin, but he said that the walls would just become streaked by the coal heater and that lace curtains would let in too much light and make it too bright to sleep at night. She did eventually paper the living room in a soft pink rose design that she ordered from the Sears Roebuck catalog. The paper looked pretty when she finished, and it really brightened up the room. But, just as he had said, the fragile petals in the paper did soon become smoked and gray from the huge heater in which, on cold days, he kept such a continuously hot fire that the room was so smothering and choking that one just lapsed into a permanent lethargy.

He also hated the fact that she wore red dresses all the time. He said that people associated the color red with the Devil and fancy ladies, like the ones who lolled around the porch of that bawdy house in town with their faces painted. (He said that wearing red shoes was an entirely different matter because people usually didn't notice your feet at all.) He thought that after she became a married woman she should settle down and become a colorless matron like the other wives in the community.

But this distress was mild compared to his reaction to her pierced ears. She got them pierced after seeing Betty Davis in Jezebel. He told her she was the

scandal of the community because earrings in pierced ears made everyone think of gypsies and traveling caravans that kidnaped children.

They continued to live together in a state of indifference, he with his farming and she with her movies and fantasies. She was fascinated by the moving pictures and, when she could scrape together the money for movie admission and bus fare to the nearest town, would sit all day in the theatre, watching the same images moving over and over again on the screen. Her favorite stars were Bette Davis and Leslie Howard. Bette was such a strong woman who usually told the men in her life what to do instead of having them dictate to her, and Leslie had such a sensitive face and lovely, long artistic fingers.

I spent a lot of time with her, and when she wasn't talking about the movies she had seen, she would listen to Helen Trent on the big, battery-operated radio, pore over the latest fashions in the picture catalogs that came through the mail (the one thing that she especially loved and wished she could afford was a soft blue hair brush with a floral design on the back), and read the books she got from the bookmobile once a month--books about women who did daring things, such as dress as men and spy for the Confederacy.

As she got older, most of the time her only escape or relaxation was rocking for hours on the front porch, staring fixedly at faraway mountains with a wistful expression on her face. One day she just continued rocking and staring until Arthur saw that only the chair was rocking and that her eyes had set on that faraway land.

But he got his final revenge. At her funeral, everyone passed by the casket and saw her in the drabbest black dress imaginable, with no earrings adorning those small, pierced earlobes.

Sandra Dillingham

Pondersome Ponderings by a Distracted Mother

We need beauty in our lives! I think we are too willing to accept ugliness as part of our environment, ugliness or its half-sister, dullness. The human spirit is eroded by lack of beauty! Lack of beauty makes us forget that there is more to life than the daily grind. Things of beauty make me feel wonderful and alive and so I do my best to surround myself with them--art prints, bright colors, intriguing doodads like the sand painting you turn over and over for the wonderfully variant designs, and best of all, living beauty: flowers. I came to be a gardener because of my love of the beauty of flowers, and although I adore art, I'd have to admit that no completely human creation moves me quite as much as the splendor of a field of vibrant bright red poppies, the perfection of a tea rose in bud, or the "Grape Kool-ade" fragrant irises doing their much-too-brief annual thing.

I'll further admit that I'm a sucker for those nineteenth century romantic tales where although the heroine is sunk in terrible poverty (and no doubt living with a brute of an insensitive mate as well), her tiny cottage is the perfect image of order and cleanliness. I know not everyone associates beauty with the terms "cleanliness" and "order," but for some reason I do; it is impossible for me to perceive anything lovely in a giant disorder. Likewise, an obvious layer of dirt anywhere other than where it belongs (the garden) seems to me a total distraction from what might otherwise be quite nice. Perhaps all full-time working mothers of young children know what I am talking about. Personally, I haven't the time nor the inclination to spend much time cleaning, so my house simply isn't very clean. Honestly, that's putting it mildly: we live in a more-or-less continual state of chaos. The alternative--making my kids completely crazy about being neat--is too unappealing. While it is a bit sad to see them leaving little kid-dom behind, I do look forward to the day when they are grown up enough to also associate beauty with order and cleanliness. (It'll be just my luck they'll be adults who couldn't care less about at least one of that holy trinity. Such is life!)

Randee Goodstadt

Lost Anything Lately?

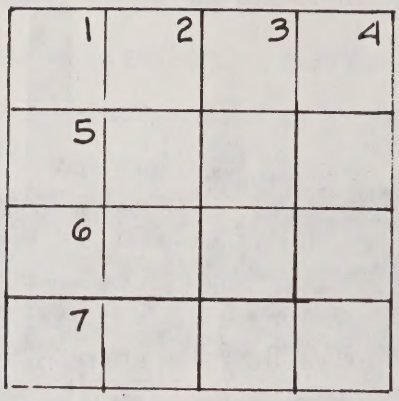
What is it about us humans that makes us keep looking for something when we lost it? It is like an obsession. Sometimes the item is very valuable, sometimes worthless. Yet we will continue to think, "where could I have put it," or "where was I when I had it last?"

What is the most valuable thing you have ever lost? Mine was my mom. It was July 1994 when she disappeared, and there is still no trace of her. I look for her still with my mind, still wondering what could have happened. But contrary to losing a piece of paper, money, jewelry or those things we usually lose, she left something for me to keep. Memories of a living, Christian family that taught me hard work, values, respect and concern for other people. Her most frequent and favorite saying was this: "When you leave this world, all you will take with you is what you give away."

Joyce Robertson

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

by Richard D Croom

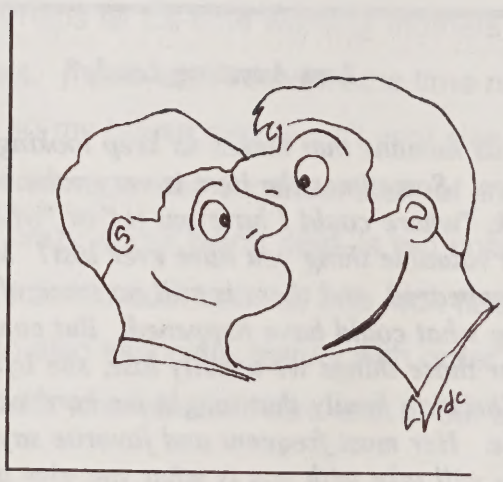


ACROSS

1.STINGING INSECTS
5. IS INDEBTED TO
6. COLLOQUIAL FOR ITEMS HERE
7. SAGACIOUS

DOWN

1. ANYTHING HAVING REAL SUBSTANCE
2. FUSELAGE OF AN AIRCRAFT
3. CORPSE
4. GROUP OF PEOPLE ACTING AS A UNIT



The Listener by Richard D. Croom

Un-Quotables

In front of the fire during the long winters,
We rummage through the box, avoiding soft centers.
-Whitman

In the balcony he did sit,
With his feet in the orchestra pit.
-Longfellow

Two talking birds - Phyllis and Sara
Always a joy! Because they're para-
-Keats

The coward in battle performs an act of labor,
When he can only react with the rattling of a sabre.
-Shakespeare

The snowy evening is a peaceful time.
Entire forests covered with rime.
-Frost

Suppose our earth were made in reverse!
Instead of ice at the poles, dirt would be worse.
-Sandburg

Richard D. Croom

Contributors

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